



Father Eugenio Barsanti, Sch.P.  
Co-Inventor of the  
Combustion Engine



*(Left: Model of the Barsanti-Matteucci engine in the Osservatorio Ximeniano in Florence)*

Eugenio Barsanti was born in Pietrasanta in Tuscany (Italy) on October 12, 1821. He entered the novitiate of the Piarist Fathers in Florence in 1838.

He began his teaching career at Collegio San Michele in Volterra in 1841. During this time, while preparing for a lecture describing the explosion of mixed hydrogen and air, he realized the potential for using the energy of the expansion of combusting gases within a motor.

Later, while teaching at a college in Florence, Father Eugenio met Felice Matteucci. From that moment on, the two men worked together on the idea of a combustion engine.

Italian law, at that time, could not guarantee sufficient international protection on a patent. Therefore, they patented their invention on June 12, 1854 in London. They completed the prototype in the 1860's.

In 1856, Barsanti and Matteucci developed a two-cylinder 5 HP motor. Two years later, they built a counter-working two-piston engine.

Barsanti thought that the new engine was a great improvement over the steam engine. It was much safer and less cumbersome and quick to operate. The main goal was to provide mechanical energy in factories and for naval propulsion. It was not light enough for use as an automotive engine.

Father Barsanti died suddenly at Seraing, Belgium of typhoid fever on March 30, 1864. Many documents concerning the patents of Barsanti and Matteucci's motor are preserved in the archives of the Galileo Museum in Florence.